

COUNTRY FACTSHEET

COLOMBIA

A desire for more climate policy
Participation

Contributions of civil society to climate policies in Colombia

Colombia – A desire for more climate policy participation

Colombia's climate policy is ambivalent as it supports ambitious climate protection goals as well as the mining and export of coal. Civil society was only rarely involved in planning and implementing climate policies leading to claims of many NGOs for more possibilities for participation.

Climate policy of Colombia

Although Colombia's economy heavily relies on the extraction of non-renewable raw materials it plays a leading role internationally among the countries supporting ambitious climate policies.¹

These ambitions are mirrored in Colombia's NDCs: The government intends to emit 20% less CO₂e in 2030 than expected according to a BAU scenario. A reduction of 30% is considered possible if international support is granted.^{2 3}

According to Höhne et al. (2014)⁴ Colombia's NDCs can be considered a fair contribution to reaching the two-degree target. Additionally, the implementation of the prioritized climate protection measures from the 33 ministries would over accomplish Colombia's reduction goals by 2%.⁵ However, the planned expansion of coal mining and use contrasts with this as does the fact that until now no Ministry was ascribed the task to reduce deforestation. As a result, an order by the supreme court from 2018 imposes the quick implementation of deforestation measures in the Amazon region.⁶

The *National Council on Economic and Social Policy (CONPES)*⁷ is responsible for climate issues. It outlined the institutional *Strategy for the Articulation of Policies and Actions on Climate Change in Colombia (CONPES 3700)* in 2011 and the *Low Carbon Development Strategy (ECDBC)*⁸, which is to decouple economic

Climate policy Colombia

Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI 2019)

- Overall value No data
- National climate policy No data

Civic space

- CIVICUS monitor re-pressed
- Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2017
 - Freedom of expression 7 of 10
 - Civil society traditions 5 of 10
 - Civil society participation 5 of 10
 - Association/ assembly rights 7 of 10

¹ Lütkemöller et al. (2018)

² Gobierno de Colombia (b)

³ Lütkemöller et al. (2018)

⁴ Höhne, N., den Elzen, M & Escalante D. (2014)

⁵ Lütkemöller et al. (2018)

⁶ Corte Suprema de Justicia de la Republica de Colombia (2018b)

⁷ El Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social (CONPES)

⁸ Estrategia Colombiana de Desarrollo Bajo en Carbono (ECDBC)

growth and emission increases until 2040.⁹ According to the Ministry of Environment the national climate policy further comprises the *National Plan for Climate Change Adaptation (PNACC)*¹⁰, the *National REDD+ Strategy (ENREDD+)*¹¹, the *Strategy for Fiscal Protection against Natural Disasters*¹² and the *National Strategy for Climate Financing*.^{13 14} Since 2016 the national climate policy is mainly organized by the *SISCLIMA*¹⁵, an inter-sectoral government coordination unit established by the *CONPES*. In spite of this mainstreaming of climate policy measures, they do not have the highest priority due to the ongoing peace process. The government initiative *Colombia Sostenible* is an attempt to link peace efforts with sustainable development.¹⁶ As strong and regionally different effects of climate change are expected in Colombia, there is a focus on adaptation measures in Colombia's climate policy.

The government regularly publishes national communication papers (*Comunicaciones Nacionales*) containing data on the impacts of climate change on Colombia, its vulnerability as well as proposed measures for climate protection and climate change adaptation. These information serve government agencies a decision-making basis.¹⁷

Climate-driven civil society in Colombia

Colombia's civil society is rather sophisticated and well organized and democratic participation has improved ever since the peace process began in 2011. Still, Civic space in Colombia is strongly characterized by violence. Violent attacks on and murder of journalists, lawyers, human rights and environmental activists as well as indigenous people have in fact increased since 2016. In spite of Colombia being one of the most dangerous countries for journalists and activists¹⁸ it has an active and diverse civil society.¹⁹

Colombia's environmental NGOs traditionally focus on fighting deforestation, protecting biodiversity and raising awareness for environmental issues. As deforestation is a major contributor to Colombia's greenhouse gas emissions this work is of great relevance to climate protection. Still, dealing with climate policy from an international perspective is rather new for most environmental organizations and there are no nationwide NGO networks primarily engaged in the coordination of climate policy claims. According to the government, civil society was involved in the development of climate policy measures nonetheless. Still,

⁹ Gobierno de Colombia (c)

¹⁰ Plan nacional de adaptación al cambio climático (PNACC)

¹¹ Estrategia nacional para la reducción de las emisiones debidas a la deforestación y la degradación forestal (ENREDD+)

¹² Estrategia de protección financiera frente a desastres

¹³ Estrategia nacional de financiamiento climático

¹⁴ Colombia. Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible (2017)

¹⁵ Sistema Nacional de Cambio Climático (SISCLIMA)

¹⁶ Gobierno de Colombia (α)

¹⁷ Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible de Colombia (α)

¹⁸ CIVICUS (2016)

¹⁹ Bertelsmann Transformation Index (2018)

many environmental organizations demand more possibilities for participation and criticize e.g. the consultations on the National Plan for Climate Change in which lobbyists of the economy held the large majority.

According to the Santos government civil society was involved in the development of climate policy measures, e.g. the *Estrategia Colombiana de Desarrollo Bajo en Carbono*²⁰. The Ministry of Environment also mentions participation possibilities for invited representatives of the social sector during the national *SIS-CLIMA* negotiations and for nonprofit organizations on the regional level.²¹ However, many environmental organizations demand more climate policy participation referring to lacking participation possibilities during the SISCLIMA negotiations and consultations on the national climate plan in 2015 which were dominated by representatives of business interests.²²

Climate-driven civil society activities in Colombia

International climate policy is a relatively new field for most Colombian NGOs. The climate issue receives some attention but it is usually dealt with in terms of communication, education and the provision of information. Civil society organizations also engage in demonstrations for more climate protection and certain climate protection projects on a local and regional scale. However, civil society does not deliberately influence the NDCs. This is mainly because NGOs lack connections with the government and responsible ministries. In addition, the government does not directly invite NGO representatives to consultations within the *Sistema Nacional de Cambio Climático (SISCLIMA)*, which is to coordinate climate protection and adaptation measures.

Still, Colombia's civil society is very experienced in forming networks. For example, large civil society networks successfully formed against big mining projects, fracking and in favor of water and forest protection.²³ Although these networks indirectly influence climate protection, there is no network supervising the implementation of the NDCs, yet.

Aside from that, legal instruments were only recently used for the first time by civil society groups to enforce a quick implementation of national climate goals in terms of the containment of deforestation. The interlinkage of climate protection, human rights and intergenerational justice was successful: The judge decided that different state measures are to reduce Amazonian deforestation to zero

²⁰ Gobierno de Colombia (b)

²¹ Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible de Colombia (b)

²² Interviews for the final report of the project *Strengthening civil society in the implementation of national climate policy*

²³ E.g. the Colombian Alliance against Fracking (Alianza Colombia libre de Fracking), the national environmental movement (Movimiento Nacional Ambiental), the Colombian movement 'Rios Vivos'. Source: Cens at Agua Viva: Homepage.

as fast as possible and additionally emphasized that civil society is given permission to participate in planning meetings on all administrative levels.^{24 25}

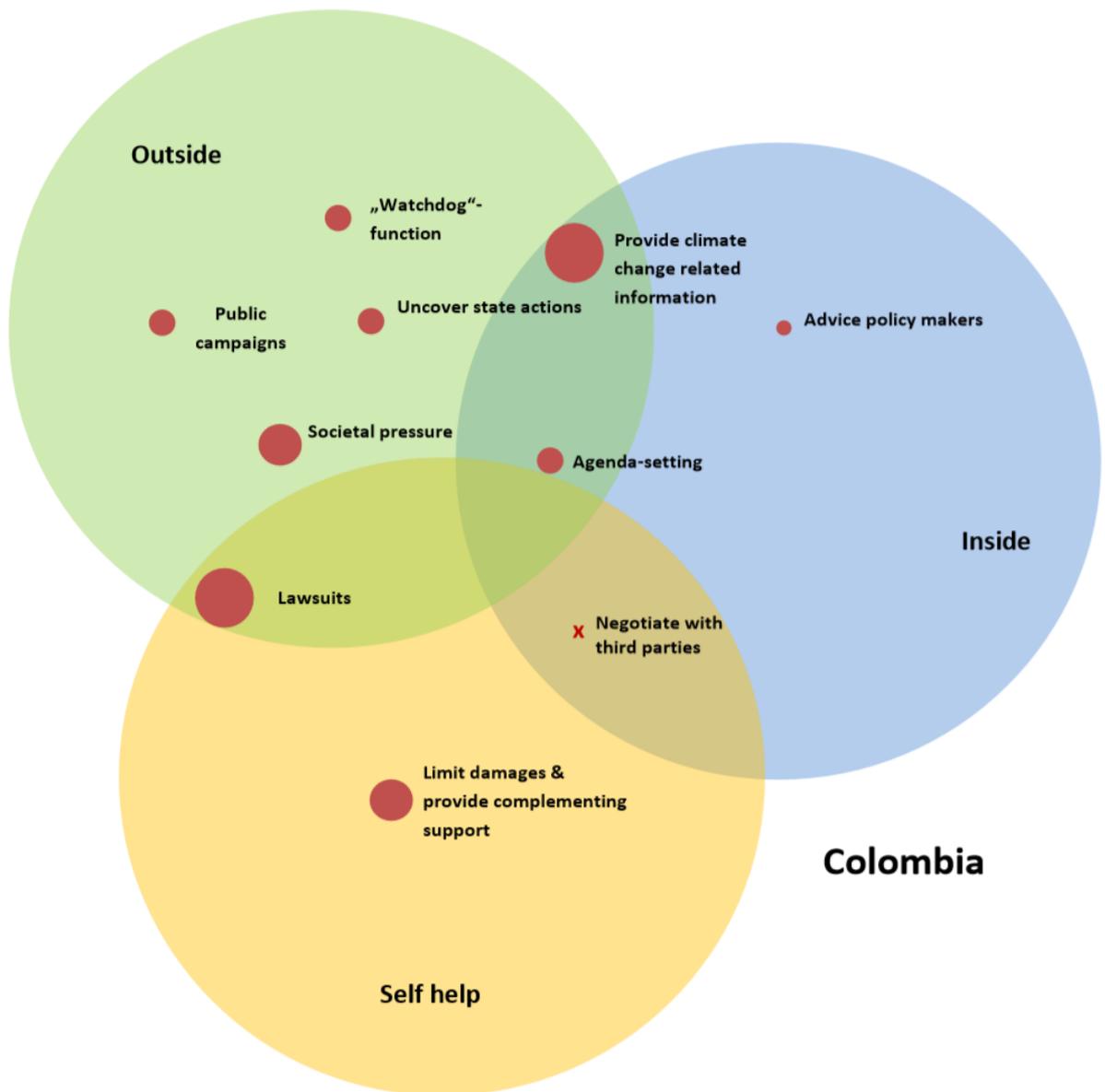


Figure 1: Activities of the climate-driven civil society in Colombia. The larger the dots the more important the respective activity. (own source)

²⁴ Corte Suprema de Justicia de la República de Colombia (2018)

²⁵ Dejusticia (2018)

Methodologies and definitions

In order to clarify the scope of this research, this chapters gives a definition of the key terms and the indicators used to analyse climate-driven civil society groups in different countries. The indicators were chosen based on a literature research. Also, it shortly introduces the central activities and capacities of civil society groups to advocate their interest, and the way they have been analysed in the examined country contexts.

Definition of terms

In contrast to the United Nations which define NGOs as all non-governmental actors,²⁶ this analysis mostly refers to NGOs as all (sub-)national organizations that are organizationally structured, refrain from violence, act in alignment with human rights, make moral claims and claim to represent universal societal interests. In doing so, these publicly acting non-profit-organizations and aim to influence political decisions on climate change and climate change adaptation²⁷ but have not been initiated by government initiatives. Consequently, trade associations, commercial associations and labour unions are excepted from this definition.^{28,29} The analysis thereby focuses on cross-organizational structures, whereby important groups and tendencies within the climate-driven societies – if existing – were considered as well.

The term **climate-driven civil society (groups)** comprises all environmental organizations that deal with climate change. This includes NGOs primarily dealing with climate change related issues as well as environmental organizations covering climate change as a cross-cutting issue or as one independent issue among others.

Civic space refers to the conditions enabling civil societies to act. To assess the civic space, the preservation of civil rights, such as freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, and the facilitation of their exercise are taken into account as well as the restriction of bureaucracy, excessive regulation and state control of foreign funding. Also, regarding civil society engagement on climate change related topics, the existence and promotion of, as well as access to (official) participatory processes dealing with climate policies is relevant for the assessment.³⁰ This includes climate policy committees as well as possibilities to participate in planning committees for climate relevant policies of other line ministries.

For the comparability of civil society activities in different countries, several indices have been used. The respective scores can be found in the country fact

²⁶ See Brunnengräber, Achim (2011)

²⁷ See Brunnengräber et al. (2005)

²⁸ Roth, Roland (2005)

²⁹ See Brunnengräber, Achim (2011)

³⁰ Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung et al. (2016)

sheets at the end of this report.

The *Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI)* was used for an assessment of the current climate policies of each country. This index assesses the NDC's ambition levels in addition to climate policy developments on a national scale.³¹

The *CIVICUS Index*³² as well as the *Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI)*³³ categories "Freedom of expression", "Civil society traditions", "Civil society participation" and "Association/ assembly rights" were drawn on to assess the civic space of each country examined. Countries not included in any of these indices were marked accordingly. Significant discrepancies between the indices' ratings and the authors' evaluation based on interviews or personal experience were explained in more detail in the texts.

Some sources used in this paper refer to the final report of the project *Strengthening civil society in the implementation of national climate policy* as well as to interviews conducted as part of it with experts in the field of climate policy and civil society and with representatives of the climate-driven civil society.

Activities of climate-driven civil society groups

Civil society organizations engage in different ways to make their voices heard by decision makers. Their climate policy related work includes the following

- Observation and definition of climate change related problems
- Provide civic education on climate polities

³¹ The Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) assesses and compares the climate protection performance of 56 countries as well as member states of the EU. Based on the analysis of 14 indices evaluating greenhouse gas emissions, renewable energies, energy use and climate policies the climate protection performance is categorized as very high, high, medium, low and very low and ranked accordingly. Here it is important to note that no country's climate protection performance was ranked very high and the top three ranks were left vacant in order to raise awareness for the generally low performance. The subcategory national climate policy comprises the latest political climate protection activities and was scored between 0 (no climate protection activities) to 100 (maximum performance) by experts of local NGOs. For further information see: <https://www.climate-change-performance-index.org/>

³² The CIVICUS Index evaluates the scope of action for civil societies in different countries and categorizes these in descending order as open, narrow, obstructed, repressed or closed. Thereby, CIVICUS mainly analyses to what extent the government and government institutions attend to their duty to guarantee assembly rights, association rights and freedom of expression. The index is mainly based on expert evaluations and the latest data from the respective countries. For further information see: <https://monitor.civicus.org/methodology/>

³³ The Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) assesses the status of the political transformation towards democracy and the transformation management of different states according to 10 categories and 38 subcategories. A score from 1 to 10 differentiates between total Autocracies (1) and Democracies in consolidation (10) in the category Democracy Status, and between failed, weak, moderate, good and very good in the Governance Index. The subcategories used in this study are those connected to civil society work. These are also scored from 1 to 10. 1 indicating a lack of tradition of civil society organizations, no assembly or association rights and no possibilities for civil society participation. Whereas 10 indicates diverse, longstanding civil society traditions as well as extensive possibilities for civil society participation and guaranteed assembly and association rights. For further information see: <https://www.bti-project.org/>

- Provide public information on and transparency in climate change related topics
- Control state compliance with its commitment on climate action
- Campaign work
- Exert societal pressure by demonstrations and the unification of individuals and groups with the same interests
- Limit harm in case of state failure
- Lawsuits
- Provide expertise and advocacy by directly cooperating with decision makers

Roth et al. (2005) differentiate these activities between (1) partly institutionalized, legal ways of participation in cooperation with decision makers or legal forms of criticism such as demonstrations (“**Inside**” according to Roth et al. (2015), also Inside-Strategies) and (2) spaces for political discourse and critical reflection on climate policies or civic education on climate policies (“**Outside**”, also Outside-Strategies). Another compilation of political activities “**Self help**” (3) was introduced by Müller et al. (2014). Self help comprises measures to improve the situation of those affected by climate change or reduce negative effects on them. In

For the analysis of the activities of climate-driven civil society, we have focused on the activities listed above, while we categorized them in consideration of the work of the authors listed above. The figure resulting from this categorization was used to summarize and to display the climate policy related activities in the surveyed countries. In the country factsheets, the activities related to each category are represented by a red dot. The size of the red dots indicates the amount of work taking place in that specific field. The results are based on scientific publications as well as interviews with experts and representatives of the climate-driven civil society of the respective countries. Thus, the score is to a certain degree subjective and can only serve as orientation.

Some sources used in this paper refer to the final report of the project *Strengthen Civil Society for the implementation of national climate policy* as well as to interviews conducted as part of it with experts in the field of climate policy and civil society or with representatives of the climate-driven civil society.

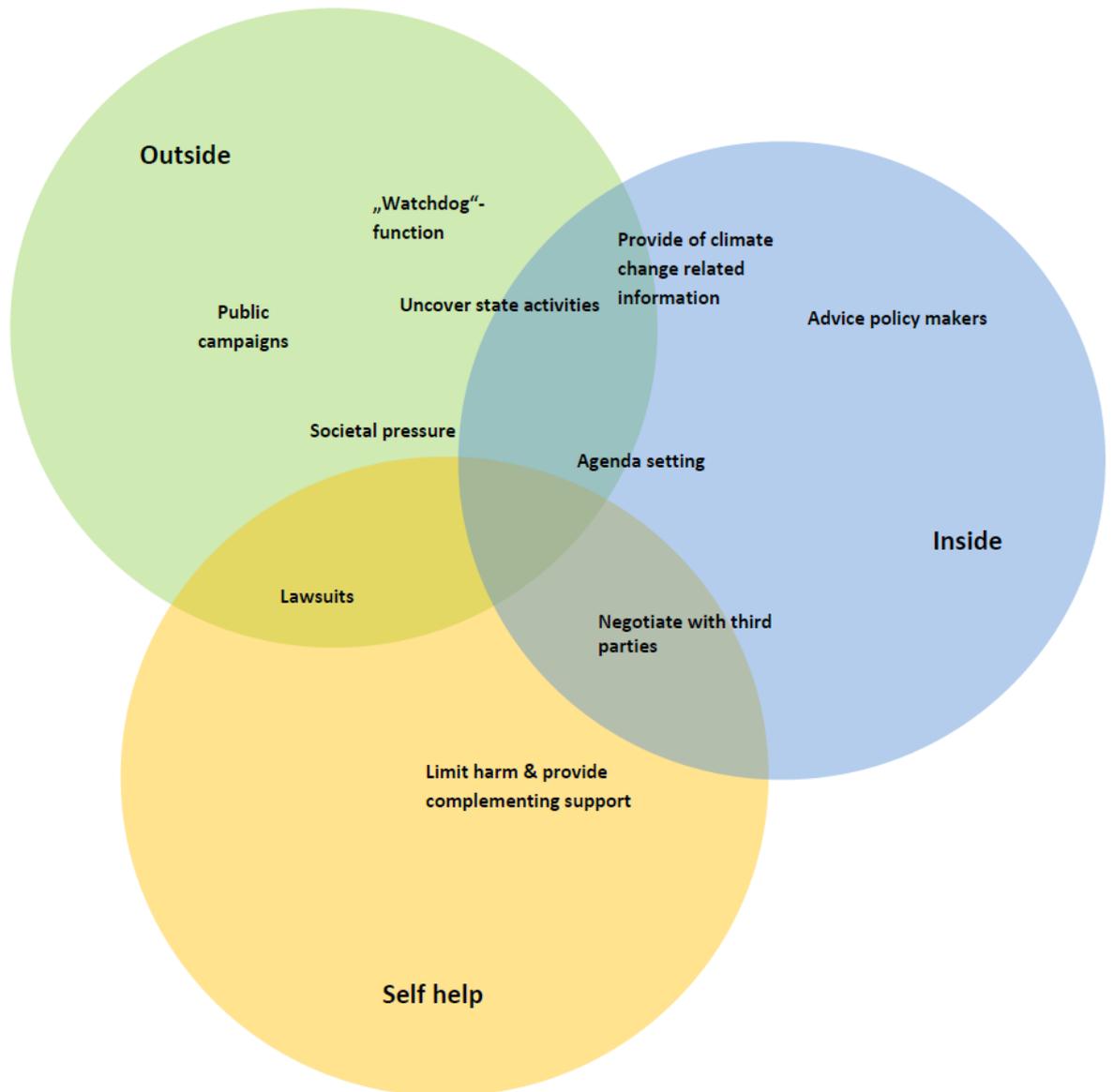


Figure 2: Climate policy related activities of the climate-driven civil society categorized according to the sections Inside, Outside and Self help (own figure).

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